

Canyon Landmarks

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PHOTOGRAPHY / KRISTIAN JACOBSEN

Those who hike and fish around Silver Lake in Big Cottonwood Canyon might be interested in a hearing on future development guidelines.

Utahns to air views on 7 canyons' future

CANYONS

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will establish guidelines for all future development proposals. "The key now will be how we implement the plan," Schneller said.

Much of the property in the canyons is under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service, which has the final say about development, but the Forest Service has asked for the county's recommendation in several key areas like White Pine canyon, where Snowbird wants to expand.

Issues likely to remain controversial even after the ink on the plan dries include expansion prospects for the four ski areas in Big and Little Cottonwood canyons, watershed protection, canyon transportation, residential development and the potential for hosting Olympic events, should Salt Lake City win its bid as an Olympic host.

Development of the master plan was supposed to take 14 months instead of 24, but Schneller believes the document will be better because of the additional time taken — and because of the additional input from special interests and the public at

Canyons at a glance

City Creek Canyon: Known as Salt Lake City's "backyard regional park" where vehicles have limited access and joggers and bicyclists are given exclusive access to the roadways on alternate days.

Red Butte Canyon: Pristine area behind the University of Utah preserved for biological research and closed to the general public.

Emigration Canyon: Made famous for being the Mormon pioneers' first conduit into the Salt Lake Valley in 1847. It has the highest concentration of residential development of the canyons.

Parleys Canyon: Named for Mormon pioneer and church leader Parley P. Pratt, who built a toll road along what is now I-80. The canyon is peppered with year-round and seasonal residential development and recreational opportunities.

Mill Creek Canyon: Contains two restaurants and several cabin and residential developments on a total of 1,600 acres. It has high daytime use.

Big Cottonwood Canyon: This canyon has residential development and much day-use during the summer. It is the home of Brighton and Solitude ski resorts, which are used primarily by local skiers.

Little Cottonwood Canyon: It is the home of Salt Lake County's two "destination" ski resorts: Snowbird, with its full complement of commercial development, and Alta, where the town, Alta, is situated among the ski runs. The canyon is frequented during summer months by hikers and rock climbers.

large. He believes the process has been thorough enough that those who speak at the public hearing Thursday will be taking one last opportunity to emphasize their position. "We won't hear anything new," he said.

Still, the County Commission received a final briefing Monday and scheduled a tour of Big and Little Cottonwood canyons with the Forest Service and canyon special interest groups Tuesday as a preface to the Thursday hearing.

Study on connecting canyons funded

Associated Press

3-20-89

A consortium of county government leaders has been awarded a \$200,000 federal grant to study the feasibility of transportation projects connecting the Wasatch Front canyons.

The Mountainland Association of Governments, representing Salt Lake, Summit and Wasatch counties, received the grant from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, which will use the group's studies as a pilot project, said association executive director Homer Chandler.

The money will provide for a yearlong study of the feasibility of such proposals as a tunnel through the Wasatch Range or a 13-mile, high-speed gondola.

If approved, the transportation system would connect recreation areas of Little Cottonwood Canyon, Big Cottonwood Canyon, Park City and Wasatch Mountain State Park.

The system would not necessarily be the same as the Ski Interconnect proposal to link the five Salt Lake area ski resorts, although that is one of

the alternatives that will be studied. The system also will not deal with traffic up the canyons, only potential traffic across the canyons.

If the Urban Mass Transportation Administration identifies a feasible system in Utah, the agency will consider applying similar technology to other high-altitude areas that have applied for funds, such as Aspen, Colo., and Squaw Valley, Calif., Chandler said.

The first step in the study is to determine whether there is a need for a connection between the canyons.

"We suspect there is," said Darrel Cook, MAG planner. "The Wasatch Canyon Transportation Study showed that the Wasatch canyons are stressed with automobile traffic in both winter and summer. There is always pressure for continued development in the canyons, and that will bring with it additional traffic."

Chandler said the need for the project hinges on whether canyon users feel they cannot fully enjoy the areas without an inter-canyon transportation system.

If such a need is determined, the study will look at, but is not limited to, seven alternatives, including a public bus system tied in with a ski interconnect; a high mountain road; a proposed tunnel system from Salt Lake County to the Snyderville Basin in Summit County; a cog railway system from Salt Lake to Snyderville; a ski-lift interconnect designed primarily to serve skiers; a high-speed gondola; or a suspended fixed-cable tramway.

Each of the proposals would cost in the millions, and identifying potential financing is part of the study.

Chandler said he has heard estimates of up to \$400 million for the Supertunnel proposal. The other systems would cost in the millions but would be much less than the tunnel plan.

If a preferred alternative is identified from the study, UMTA would begin a detailed engineering review lasting another year. After that, development would be subject to financing, permits and zoning.

"We're looking at well into the 1990s before we see anything," Cook said.